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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 03/24/06

INDEX:

(1) New proposal floated to shift the Henoko coastal plan 200 meters toward the ocean; With government urging compromise, Yamasaki presents proposal to chiefs of northern part of mainland and others; Nago City mayor: No change in rejecting minor revision of plan

(2) "Settlement of Futenma relocation and cost-sharing issues difficult by the end of the month," says Satoshi Morimoto in speech

(3) Japan, US, France to develop new-type nuclear fuel, senior US government official reveals; Prevention of nuclear proliferation eyed

(4) 2006 LDP presidential election - post-Koizumi candidates: Former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda, 69, biding his time, carefully watching the diplomatic scene

(5) Koizumi successor - Study of Shinzo Abe (Part 3): Making effort to have widen personnel ties to get firsthand economic information

(6) Japan's Asia diplomacy: Promising post-Koizumi successors divided over Asia diplomacy, with Abe, Aso tough toward China, but Tanigaki, Fukuda wishing to improve relations with it

(7) Asia diplomacy: Japan's influence serves US interests

ARTICLES:

(1) New proposal floated to shift the Henoko coastal plan 200 meters toward the ocean; With government urging compromise, Yamasaki presents proposal to chiefs of northern part of mainland and others; Nago City mayor: No change in rejecting minor revision of plan

RYUKYU SHIMPO (Page 1) (Excerpt)  
March 24, 2006

It was learned on March 23, in connection with the plan to relocate the US Marines' Futenma Air Station to the coastal portion of Camp Schwab, that a revised plan has been floated within the government and ruling camp that would shift the location of the currently proposed site 200 meters toward the ocean, and that this plan has been presented in the middle of this month to the heads of local governments in the northern part of the main island of Okinawa by Taku Yamasaki, chairman of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Okinawa Development Committee. Several government sources acknowledged the existence of the slightly revised plan. Since the scope of revision requiring approval of Nago City would be a shift toward the ocean of approximately 450 meters at minimum, the government warned that implementation of such would be impossible, but the plan to shift the location 200 meters is a compromise proposal just under the wire, the aim being to urge Nago City to meet it half way. But there are still likely to be even more twists and turns before the understanding of Nago City is obtained.

(2) "Settlement of Futenma relocation and cost-sharing issues difficult by the end of the month," says Satoshi Morimoto in speech

TOKYO 00001557 002 OF 009

KANAGAWA SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)  
March 23, 2006

The guest speaker for the March meeting of the Kanagawa Political-Economic Forum on March 22 was Takushoku University Professor Satoshi Morimoto, who spoke on the theme, "USFJ realignment and the Japan-US alliance."

Professor Morimoto stated: "In the realignment of US forces in Japan, the public's eye is fixed on the deployment of a nuclear-powered carrier to Yokosuka port, but it is not just Yokosuka, for at some point, a carrier will be coming to Sasebo Base, as well. The coordination between the government and local governments has been slow going, and a resolution by the end of the month is difficult,"

The main points of his speech are as follows:

Because the arc of instability (from the Korean Peninsula through Southeast Asia to the Middle East) virtually contains no countries with democratic governments, the United States sees the potential danger there for terrorism and war. Japan needs to grasp what the US is thinking and then act. Japan from a geopolitical perspective is an advantageous location for the US armed forces.

The merit of bringing in the US Army's I Corp command to Camp Zama, compared to leaving the headquarters on the American mainland, is that 17 hours can be shaven off the response time. The unit of approximately 200 who will be deployed to Camp Zama will be of an extremely high intellectual level and centered on officers who will have central command over the Army, Navy, and Air Force in the entire region.

In the case of the deployment of a nuclear-powered carrier to Yokosuka, when it achieves full speed near the island of Izu-Oshima, the carrier-based jets will take off. For a carrier, the greatest threat is from torpedoes launched by submarines. Since the Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) possesses over 100 world-class anti-sub patrol planes, It would be an advantage for the US forces to have MSDF personnel relocated to Atsugi base. As a

result, Japan's maritime safety would be enhanced.

The biggest key to wrapping up the final report on USFJ realignment will be the relocation of the US Marines from Futenma Air Station to Camp Schwab. However, there are rumors in Okinawa that Defense Agency Director General Fukushima Nukaga may be forced to resign, and even within the Japanese government, views are split. Signs of a political fight have emerged.

We also can see signs of a struggle among contenders to succeed Prime Minister Koizumi, whose term in office will end in September. The sharing of the cost relocating US Marines to Guam is also a problem, and a resolution of the realignment issues by the end of the month seem impossible. It looks like only a political decision will settle the issues of relocating Futenma and the moving cost.

(3) Japan, US, France to develop new-type nuclear fuel, senior US government official reveals; Prevention of nuclear proliferation eyed

TOKYO 00001557 003 OF 009

ASAHI (Page 3) (Excerpts)  
March 23, 2006

Robert Shane Johnson, acting director of the Office of Nuclear Energy, Science and Technology, which controls nuclear cooperation with foreign countries at the US Department of Energy (DOE), on March 21 gave an interview to an Asahi Shimbun reporter. During the interview, Johnson revealed that Japan, the US and France are now looking into the possibility of the joint development of new-type nuclear fuel aimed to prevent nuclear proliferation. The envisaged fuel will be produced, by mixing plutonium harvested at nuclear plants with a radioactive ingredient called transuranium element. Japan wants to work on the project at the proto-type fast-breeder reactor "Monju" in Tsuruga, Fukui Prefecture and the proto-type fast-breeder

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experimental reactor "Joyo" in Oarai Town, Ibaraki Prefecture.

Transuranic element to be used

Washington in February released the International Nuclear Partnership (GNEP) research and development plan aimed to resume the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel for commercial use after a hiatus of about 30 years. Joint development efforts among Japan, the US and France are a step to materialize the initiative.

According to Johnson, responsible authorities of the three countries are now pursuing the initial-stage discussion. The plan is that the US and France will take charge of developing fuel samples and Japan will carry out a combustion experiment at the small-size Joyo experimental breeder. If the experiment is successful, further experiment will be conducted at Monju, using similar samples.

The US government has not yet formally sounded out the Japanese government about the use of its fast-breeder reactor, but sources connected with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) said, "We have no objection to the idea." Inspecting Monju in February, Johnson said, "This facility is extremely important in promoting the leading-edge development of nuclear energy. He thus expressed hopes for an early resumption of the operation of Monju, which has been suspended since the sodium leakage accident in 1995. Since the US has no fast-breeder reactors for experimental use, it wants to obtain cooperation from Japan by authorizing it to share technology and information with it.

In view of a growing demand for energy, GNEP is also designed to provide nuclear plants and nuclear fuel to developing countries, and the plan is to limit the countries that recycle (reprocess for reuse) spent nuclear fuel from such nuclear plants to those that have already facilities, such as Japan and France, so that

the proliferation of nuclear weapons can be checked.

#### Mountain of technological challenges

(Commentary) The material which the US plans to mix with nuclear fuel is a nuclear product called minor actinide (MA), harvested when uranium nuclear fuels, such as neptunium, americium and curium are combusted in a nuclear reactor.

It is difficult to handle MA when it is mixed with nuclear fuel because it emits extremely strong radioactivity, and so, it is difficult for terrorists to steal it.

TOKYO 00001557 004 OF 009

Technology to extract MA has yet to be established. There are a mountain of challenges to tackle before using the material, including a new reprocessing technology for extracting it when it is mixed with plutonium and the development of a new-type nuclear reactor that can burn new nuclear fuel.

Though Johnson said, "I do not think we are underestimating technological difficulties involved", prospects for the feasibility of the project has yet to be obtained. Even so, the US has come up with the new project plan, facing two growing maladies that have hindered the commercial use of nuclear power - the potential danger of nuclear proliferation involved in the promotion of the peaceful use of nuclear power and the heavy drag of the disposal of nuclear waste. Johnson said that the new program is designed to tackle the two maladies at a time.

(4) 2006 LDP presidential election - post-Koizumi candidates:  
Former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda, 69, biding his time, carefully watching the diplomatic scene

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)  
March 17, 2006

By Yu Takayama

There is no change in the way he tends to be brusque with others. But because of that trait, he is able to make his presence felt even more. "Mr. Fukuda has said it's annoying to be called (a potential post-Koizumi candidate). Despite that, why is he gaining popularity?" With this expression, former Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori, dubbed as a linchpin in selecting presidential candidates in the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to succeed Prime Minister Koizumi, indicated he has pinned his hopes on former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda, 69

Fukuda's blunt attitude was also seen on Feb. 17, when a parliamentary group of 50 or so lawmakers or Chimei Risshi-kai (meaning the group of late blooming lawmakers aged 50 or more) gathered in Tokyo. During the get-together, Fukuda (who was first elected to the Diet when he was 53), announced he took the vacant post of chair and stated: "I may be a caretaker rather than the chair," and, "I act as a stopgap chair until someone takes the post formally." His way of speaking was unique - as if to quiet down group members' calls on Fukuda to lead Japan. One participant, who is well aware of Fukuda's delicate stance, told this reporter: "I decided then and there to help our group (make a move for expanding support for Mr. Fukuda)."

The tide of opinion in the LDP is that Fukuda is reluctant to raise his hand on his own initiative as a presidential candidate, but he would become willing to do so if he were put in a situation where there is no choice but Fukuda. A senior party member, in fact, explained: "The public may favor (Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo) Abe, but if we legislators unite to back

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Fukuda, then he will run in the race." An influential House of Councilors member pointed out: "The other lawmakers do not seem as qualified as Fukuda to be presidential candidates."

As if linked to the moves of the group, Fukuda has become notably

active in commenting on foreign policy, which has been Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's weak point. At a general meeting on March 12 of the LDP's Meguro Chapter, Fukuda referred to

TOKYO 00001557 005 OF 009

relations with Asian nations and implicitly criticized Koizumi's diplomacy: "We can't go around quarrelling with others."

On March 16, Fukuda visited Seoul. He was in South Korea as deputy director of the Japan-South Korea Cooperation Committee, of which his father Takeo, who once served as prime minister, had been chair. In a meeting with President Roh Moo Hyun, a critic of Prime Minister Koizumi for his repeated visits to Yasukuni Shrine, Fukuda underscored the necessity of mending fences with South Korea.

In April, Fukuda plans to travel to Sri Lanka, and in May, Jordan. In late January, he met with US Deputy National Security Advisor Crouch at his request. Fukuda's brisk movements leave the impression that he is rebuilding the failed aspects of Koizumi diplomacy. Encouraged by the recent move of Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) to appoint elderly lawmaker Kozo Watanabe to the post of chair of the party's Diet Affairs Committee, veteran lawmakers in the LDP, too, are coming to life. Given his age of 69, Fukuda could unite veteran lawmakers, who are against a generational change in the party leadership, to back up him. A seasoned lawmaker of the Mori faction construed Fukuda's active movements on the diplomatic front as a demonstration of his emergency readiness.

But Shinzo Abe, the most popular presidential candidate, also belongs to the Mori faction. Former LDP Vice President Taku Yamasaki has remarked, "It's impossible for one faction to back two presidential candidates." Following this common knowledge, Abe's announcement of running for the presidential race would mean Fukuda would not. If both were to come forward as presidential candidates, the Mori faction, the largest in the party, would split.

Some describe Fukuda as a man of patience who will bide his time. Meanwhile, one veteran legislator urged Fukuda to come forward, saying: "If you toss your hat into the ring before Abe does so, he won't be able to do so." Will Fukuda actually run for the presidency? Mori already has assumed the possibility of Fukuda not running. Mori would then offer his chairmanship to Fukuda, and the faction would change its name from Mori's to Fukuda's. The Fukuda faction would then work to back up Abe. But Mori also told an aide:

" Abe may find himself wrapped in the mood that Fukuda is the only candidate for the faction to back, no matter how strongly Abe wants to run. If that is the case, will Abe make way for Fukuda? And then will Fukuda accept the challenge?"

(5) Koizumi successor - Study of Shinzo Abe (Part 3): Making effort to have widen personnel ties to get firsthand economic information

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Excerpts)  
March 22, 2006

It is essential for the person who gains the post of prime minister to build personal connections in order to strengthen his or her survivability. Shinzo Abe's network of personal ties lies mainly in the Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) Mori faction, to which he belongs.

Abe visited Nomi and other cities in Ishikawa Prefecture in the

TOKYO 00001557 006 OF 009

cold rain on March 12 to deliver campaign speeches for the eldest son of Yoshiro Mori in the by-election campaigning for an Ishikawa Prefectural Assembly seat. It is rare for the chief cabinet secretary, who takes charge of the Prime Minister's

Office during the prime minister's absence, to visit local areas to give vote-getting speeches.

When his father, Shintaro Abe, was the leader of the faction, Mori was regarded as one of the "big four." Backed by Mori, Abe assumed the post of deputy chief cabinet secretary and took charge of the issue of Japanese nationals abducted by North Korean agents. He became well known across the nation as a result of coming to grips with the abduction issue.

In the speeches, Abe said: "It is not correct to think that I came here because he is Mr. Mori's son," but he added: "I must not forget his kindness."

Keeping in mind the possibility that the LDP would face setbacks in the House of Councillors election in 2007, Mori has said that the party should not let Abe run in the upcoming presidential race but instead keep him as an ace in the hole. Future development of relations between Mori and Abe would have some effect on the coming presidential election.

"An increasing number of meetings will be held from now," Policy Research Council Chairman Hidenao Nakagawa said to Abe after the fiscal 2006 budget bill passed the House of Representatives on March 2. He has served four terms more than Abe. Nakagawa has taken the lead in laying out a scheme on a post-Koizumi successor as a senior member of the Mori faction.

Junior members have begun to draw up a manifesto (set of campaign pledges) in preparation for Abe to officially announce his candidacy.

In the business world, Abe has been on close terms with Central Japan Railway Company Chairman Yoshiyuki Kasai. Kasai proposed to Kaoru Yosano about four years ago, "Let's hold study meetings joined by the next generation of leaders." Kasai and Yosano were classmates at Tokyo University. Both picked Abe as a member of the study group, which calls itself "Shiki no kai."

Yosano took the lead in unifying views in the ruling camp over wiretapping authorization bills, which was enacted into law in 1999. He had said at that time that he was impressed by Abe's efforts and activities as Diet Affairs Committee vice chairman.

Kasai has also joined the Experts Council on Official Development Assistance (ODA) Reform, which was set up by Abe late last year.

Abe has set up a number of study meetings with businessmen or economists. He is aiming to obtain firsthand information from former Daiwa Research Institute President Junzo Matoba, who had good relations with his father, and others.

Former Industrial Bank of Japan President Masao Nishimura is his uncle. The eldest daughter Ushio Inc. Chairman Jiro Ushio, a member of the Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy, is the wife of Abe's elder brother.

Abe has many acquaintances in the US in part because he served as secretary to the foreign minister. He has established good

SIPDIS

TOKYO 00001557 007 OF 009

relations with former Deputy Secretary of State Armitage and former Senior Asia Director Green of the National Security Council (NSC). He can contact them on the phone any time.

In a meeting with visiting South Korea's Grand National Party President Pak on March 7, Abe said: "Now that there are problems pending between the two countries, It is important for us to meet and discuss matters." Pak replied: "I hope our past accounts will be resolved in our generation."

The challenge Abe should tackle is to build a network of contacts in China, which is now at odds with Japan over the prime minister's visits to Yasukuni Shrine.

(6) Japan's Asia diplomacy: Promising post-Koizumi successors divided over Asia diplomacy, with Abe, Aso tough toward China, but Tanigaki, Fukuda wishing to improve relations with it

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)  
March 24, 2006

Promising post-Koizumi candidates for the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) presidential election, which is slated for September, are making it clear that their views of China and South Korea are different. Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe and Foreign Minister Taro Aso stand tough on China, while Finance Minister Sadakazu Tanigaki and former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda emphasize the importance of repairing the strained relations with China and South Korea, by even visiting those countries. Business leaders also have a strong interest in bettering relations with those two countries. Asia diplomacy will definitely come out as an important campaign issue in the presidential election.

Yen loan programs for China for this fiscal year were supposed to be approved at a cabinet meeting at the end of the fiscal year. But at a press conference yesterday, Abe announced a policy of delaying such approval, telling reporters: "Considering various circumstances involving Japan and China, it will take much more time to coordinate views internally."

Japan has already decided to end its yen loans programs to China by the time of the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008. In addition to that, Japan yesterday decided to delay giving cabinet approval to yen loan programs for China. This decision is taken as something that came out in line with Abe's instructions given to the Foreign Ministry and followed the way that Aso had paved.

Aso has indicated he is ready to take countermeasures if China launches extraction of natural gas in the East China Sea unilaterally. By making China well aware of the importance of yen loans, Aso appears to have gained the upper hand in negotiations on exploration of gas fields and other matters involving the two countries.

While Abe and Aso are becoming even tougher on China, other promising post-Koizumi candidates have been actively publicizing their stance of emphasizing Asia diplomacy.

"Former Prime Minister Masayoshi Ohira played a significant role in restoring diplomatic relations with China," Tanigaki said on March 17, when he dined with Chinese Ambassador to Japan Wang Yi at a Chinese restaurant in Tokyo. Referring to the achievements of the late Ohira, who led the Kochikai from which the Tanigaki

TOKYO 00001557 008 OF 009

faction originated, Tanigaki indicated his position of stressing good relations with China. On March 25, he will visit Beijing and meet with Finance Minister Jin Renqing.

Fukuda, who belongs to the Mori faction like Abe, is becoming a major presence in terms of relations with South Korea. Together with former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone and others, Fukuda visited Seoul March 15. In a conversation with President Roh Moo Hyun, Fukuda appealed to the South Korean leaders to "make a revolutionary progress" to break the impasse in the present Japan-South Korea relations.

Post-Koizumi candidates have different ideas also about the idea of building a new national memorial center for the war dead. Abe is dismissive of it. He said at an Upper House Budget Committee session on March 23: "Spirits of the dead cannot feel comfortable at an intentionally built facility."

Meanwhile, Fukuda is a member of the parliamentary league promoting the construction of a memorial center. Among the members of the league are New Komeito Representative Takenori Kanzaki and its Secretary General Tetsuzo Fuyushiba. The New Komeito is a coalition partner of the LDP. The league seems to be of use for Fukuda to highlight his stance of emphasizing the

coalition framework of the LDP and the New Komeito.

(7) Asia diplomacy: Japan's influence serves US interests

YOMIURI (Page 15) (Full)  
March 22, 2006/03/24

Commentary by Michael Green, Japan Chair and senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)

The United States gives priority in its diplomatic strategy toward Asia not only to strengthening the alliance with Japan but also to supporting Japan's own diplomacy toward Asia. The Bush administration's initial strategic goal was to establish an equal partnership with Japan in dealing with security and political issues in Asia.

In his first meeting with Prime Minister Koizumi in the US in June 2001, President Bush smoothly pushed that agenda. Prime Minister Koizumi was the first leader after the terrorist attacks on the US in September 2001 who confidently told the President: "The Free World must wipe out terrorism." The Prime Minister immediately turned his words into action. He dispatched Maritime Self-Defense Force units to the Indian Ocean on a mission to assist the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

On North Korea's uranium enrichment problem, President Bush insisted on the need for a multilateral diplomatic approach, including Japan. Based on that call, the six-party talks were initiated. On Iraq, the Koizumi administration independently and swiftly decided to contribute 5 billion dollars. This figure is smaller than that on the occasion of the Gulf war, but Japan still won great trust (from the international community). The Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) troops stationed in Samawah also have won respect from Americans and Iraqis. Japan's foreign policy has now gained real influence in the world. Japan's growing influence also serves US national interests.

The most remarkable change in the international community

TOKYO 00001557 009 OF 009

recently has been China's rapid buildup of national power and influence. The US is not calling on the international community to adopt a policy of containing China; nor is China seeking to confront the US. Beijing, however, desires to become the representative of Asia and have a veto over US moves by establishing a US-China bipolar structure in Asia. If Japan's can enhance its presence on the diplomatic front, it will be able to prevent such a disadvantageous bipolar system from developing.

The US has urged China to take proper actions as a responsible stakeholder. In such efforts, Japan can be a good model to show that democratic countries have greatly contributed to the international community.

In order to increase its diplomatic influence, Japan should develop a farsighted strategy. To that end, it is necessary for Japan to take the following four points into consideration. First, Japan should draw up its own "Asia vision," a foreign policy based on its sense of values that specifically focuses on democracy, the rule of law, and the market economy. These principles are about to take hold in Indonesia, Taiwan, and South Korea, so Japan could be the promoter of such a trend.

Second, it is also important to deepen ties with democratic countries in Asia. In this sense, too, it is vital for the US, Japan, and Australia to promote the trilateral security talks that were inaugurated in 2001. It is also desirable to increase cooperation with India.

Third, continuing the Ground Self Defense Force (GSDF) troops' mission in Iraq is also important. The dispatch of GSDF personnel to Samawah gave the impression to the international community that Japan is capable of undertaking a role in the international security area. Japan should consider dispatching the GSDF to other parts of the world, for instance, Sudan or Haiti, for



humanitarian assistance, once it has withdrawn its troops from Iraq. Otherwise, the importance of Japan's presence in the world may diminish. The absence of the SDF would allow other countries to interpret that Japan's security policy has retreated.

Lastly, it is important for Japan to implement the measures Japan and the US in US force realignment talks agreed to take.

Many Japanese have been advocating the slogan of "Japan leaving the US to enter Asia." But I believe that an increasing number of people now take the view that the right way is for Japan "enter Asia while staying intimate with the US." A solid US-Japan alliance will strengthen Japan's Asia diplomacy.

SCHIEFFER